

Committee on Resources

Testimony

STATEMENT BEFORE THE INTERIOR HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS'

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Mr. Chairman, it is my pleasure to be here and address this Subcommittee. It was some two years ago that I addressed this committee regarding the National History Preservation Act, specifically the operations of the Advisory Council on History Preservation and proposed new regulations for that agency.

I am happy to report that much progress has been made in that area and the new regulations being proposed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation are much different than the proposal two years ago. Through this committee's work, significant regulation streamlining has occurred which will have an effect of reducing the cost of this program in Utah.

In that testimony, I talked about a growing opportunity in Utah for heritage tourism and developing heritage areas. I specifically discussed the Sanpete Regional Heritage Tourism Council and emphasized a need to support a heritage industry.

Now I come to talk about another specific area of Utah, the San Rafael Swell Western Heritage area. This area of the state is one of the country's leading last frontiers and possesses important historical, cultural, and natural resources that are representative of the central themes associated with the history of the American West. Themes including pre-Columbian and Native American culture, exploration, pioneering, settlement, ranching, outlaws, and prospecting and mining. The San Rafael Swell area has significant resources and institutional structures that can support the development of a heritage region in the state of Utah. This designation will be an economic asset to this part of Utah and will strengthen a needier economy.

The area has hundreds of important historic resources that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places or eligible. They include:

Helper Historic District with over fifty properties on the National Register. This historic area has homes and associated mining and transportation sites and provides a great tourism experience. The town of Helper has caught the vision of what might be by adding a mining museum, The Western Mining and Railroad Museum. There is a trail walk and outdoor interpretive exhibits, not to mention the real thrill of seeing in operation, the rail yard and ongoing related activities associated with this National Register Historic District. Bridges, rail facilities, the houses and people all make this a wonderful significant heritage destination.

A theater group is now in Helper which is adding night life. The annual illuminated Christmas parade attracts thousands.

Not far from Helper is the historic town of Kenilworth, a company town, it is all there with its narrow grid streets to company housing, outbuildings, water channels, bridges, guard shack, and much more. Hiawatha, also close by, is a place ready to happen. It has the old fire station, community church, company store and even the infamous jail all in tact. It is a potential living history museum with machine shops, official cottages and mining service facilities. Other places like Scofield and Sunnyside have stories to tell and all of these would be reason enough to designate this area as a National Heritage Area. But there is more -- much more.

Price has numerous historic buildings and a fine quality museum, largely dedicated to the archaeology and paleontology of the region. It is a fine facility of national importance connected to the College of Eastern Utah. It provides one of the anchors to the region. All of this is in the northern part of the proposed area.

East of this is Nine Mile Canyon. Nine Mile Canyon has pioneer homesteads, an old town site of Harper, Flying Diamond Ranch. The Canyon also sports historic graffiti and significant prehistoric Rock Art. Figures include mountain sheep and many others images. Emery and Carbon county have numerous national significant sites with the recently developed Buckhorn Wash Rock Art site, Temple Mountain Wash, and Black Dragon Canyon pictograph. All are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The internationally famous Cleveland Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry, Castledale historic buildings, and important San Rafael Museum add much to the region as well as the Dry Wash petroglyphs, Lime Kilns, Head of Sinbad pictographs, and numerous historic, archaeological and Paleontological attractions.

The Green River with its outdoor recreation opportunities and the famous John Wesley Powell Museum anchor the eastern edge of this significant heritage area.

Many of these are open for tours, site visits or events. Other destinations include the Cedar Mountain Driving Tour which gives the public access to archaeological sites of the area; the Price Municipal Building, listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its important local son, Lynn Fausett, WPA (Work Progress Administration) murals. A museum here offers hands-on and interpretive experiences for the tourist, resident and river traveler alike.

There is not only places to visit, but there is also organizational support. In this area, there are three Certified Local Governments, certified under the National Park Service Historic Preservation Act and one Main Street town, the Carbon, Helper, and Green River certified local governments and Helper Main Street. These local governments already receive grants and technical assistance for developing a heritage industry in Utah. Even small groups like Reflections of the Ancients program in Wellington are there to serve the people and provide excellent heritage education, tourism, and recreational experience for people who visit this important region. The Castle Country Travel Council has been a long supporter of the heritage of this region. Private organizations like the Adventure River Expeditions out of Green River and the College of Eastern Utah have also supported this regions heritage destination experience and economic develop through heritage. With this legislation, a multi-county organization can develop the plans and implement joint efforts to develop the area.

The San Rafael Swell has the resources, the people, and the organizations for the development of a heritage area management plan which could assist in conserving this important heritage area, establish and maintain

interpretive exhibits, develop recreational opportunities and increased public awareness and appreciation of the natural, historical, and cultural resources of this region. Not only that, but the economic development -- the key outcome can be realized.

This heritage area, developed in partnership with businesses, local, state, and federal partners, has an excellent opportunity for success. Most importantly, it is a partnership for economic development and has as its outcome, heritage tourism and building, what we call in Utah, a heritage industry -- a partnership between private and public sector to achieve economic success through the use of our heritage. We strongly support the proposed legislation to create the San Rafael Swell Western Heritage Area.

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